

Key findings on the influence of *students* on School Safety

All respondents in course of the interviews perceive a relationship between student behaviors and attitudes, and school violence and safety issues. Following are some of the key influencing factors that are highlighted.

Student crime

- Fights are more violent now, are more frequent at the beginning of the year, while passing between classes, and among freshman students.
- Assaults occur between students, often by special education students, and in some cases between staff.
- Deaths are uncommon and occur outside school mostly as a result of gang involvement or suicides.
- Student gang members intimidate, act out, are starting out younger now, and frequently conceal gang affiliations.
- Hate-crimes now cross ethnic groups, are often based on student sexual orientations or freshman hazing; extreme cases of physical hazing are almost non-existent.
- Marijuana and the advent of cocaine are most common. Additionally, there are behavioral ramifications from substance abuse and challenges in testing for drugs due to privacy issues. Other concerns like alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs, and parties like raves exist.
- Locker room thefts and break-ins are common; computer hacking is gradually increasing.
- Vandalism after school hours and graffiti in places like restrooms is common.
- Knives, unloaded guns, bullets, minor explosives, and accessories like chains are most common weapons. Annual changes in weapons used by students, family influence, and ease of weapon availability are additional concerns.

Student behavior

- Language and attitude such as bullying, name-calling, and threatening are most common behaviors.
- Freshman students observe, act out, test their own limits, and test the staff's management skills.
- Student silence code is more common, barring few that feel comfortable with staff approachability.
- Freshman students tend to act out more as do male students and students with lagging academic performance.
- Student "baggage" and perpetuation of negative family behaviors is more common now.
- Student pregnancies and sexual abuse towards students exist in some isolated communities.

Trigger points for violence

- Relationship or "girlfriend-boyfriend" problems, gossip, misunderstandings, "mad-dogging" or staring, and negative language are most common triggers for fights and violence.
- Carrying over fights from communities, families, or gangs is common.

While schools might not be in a position to resolve most community and parental factors with respect to school violence, they might be more successful in controlling many of the student factors related to school violence. It is very useful for schools to be aware of their student factors so that they can try and accommodate related information into their policy discussions and can design programs tailored to their own local needs.